

Postmodernism: Metaphysics, Narrative, Identity Crisis

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Abstract- The linguistic turn here is based on the belief that because language is riven with figuration a mobile army of metaphors metonyms and anthropomorphism to borrows Nietzsche's phrase it cannot represent the world with any degree of accuracy let alone in the immediate undistorted way that some theories of mind have for their meaning, rather than on reference to some theories of mind have claimed. . The temper of the times is apparent from the widespread eagerness to embrace the death of the subject a diktat which became as Perry Anderson noted the slogan of the decade. The proclamation filtered through the various disciplines associated with structuralist theory.

Index Terms- Postmodernism, metaphysical, anthropocentric, human integration, feminism.

INTRODUCTION

Postmodernist thinking has typically reacted with suspicion to the notion of origins. As first cause or foundation, an origin a transcendental ground to which all subsequent phenomena must pay obeisance resurrects the deity that the "death of God" supposedly vanquished. This resistance to origins is matched by a much messier obsession with "ends." Postmodernist endings are not so neat as the term suggests however. They are thorny and recalcitrant, at the very least placing certain practices or instruments of thought off-limits at most, the latter are rendered fallacious, untenable, "no longer possible."

An abiding example of this temper is the seemingly suicidal declamation of the end of philosophy. Where philosophy has engaged directly with postmodernism let us call the result, for the moment, post-Nietzschean continental philosophy – it has produced a kind of thinking that cleaves to the shadow of its own morality, compulsively rehearsing its own demise. But unlike other postmodernist annulments the ends of authorial presence and ideology for example philosophy's reprieve was granted in the

same breath as its death sentence was pronounced. This is to say, accompanying the termination was the possibility of renewal, ways of finding new uses for philosophical thinking. In fixating upon the conditions of its own abolition then philosophy turned those conditions into a kind of negative capability.

Post war French philosophers have generally repudiated the notion of the end of philosophy. Luce Irigaray derided it as one of the "status quo values." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari declared that "the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us it is just tiresome idle chatter."

Derrida posits the closure of the idea of the book permitting its indefinite continuation rather than the more definitive end. It is not so much a process of completion then as a complex maneuvering between ending and renewal. To carry out this maneuver, philosophical postmodernism has performed a comprehensive demolition job on western orthodoxies. Knowledge is deemed questionable, and it is no longer the job of philosophy to provide it. The human subject is dispossessed until it seems no longer to exist and its philosophical corollary humanism is unmasked as a form of covert oppression. Narrative logic is broken down, removing one of the central organizing principles of western thought. The notion of the "real world" is permanently encased in quotation marks and even such an uncomplicated matter as sexual difference is rendered illegitimate and misleading while newer more difficult ways of theorizing gender are opened up.

Within the philosophical tradition, the two chief advocates of the above are Descartes, whose method of radical skepticism led to the foundationalism claim that a correct beginning could finally be made and Hegel whose synthetic approach first of all organized the entire tradition into a purposive and dialectical whole and then assumed that it had reached its

apogee with no further work to be done. The rest of this essay will examine the postmodernist reaction to this legacy- the major philosophical attempts to reveal its gaps inconsistencies and shortcomings and the efforts made to bring it to an end.

Any account of postmodernism and philosophy must deal with the problem of naming. Put simply the two terms cannot stay separate for long. Philosophy slides into theory which combines philosophical reflection with elements of sociology, historiography, psychoanalysis, politics, anthropology, mythology, and literature. And postmodernism mutates into “post structuralism” the term most associated with the above mentioned *mélange*. It is prudent to note therefore that once the theme of the “end of philosophy” has been invoked the discussion cannot be restricted to philosophical concerns as those concerns have generally been recognized and understood within the western tradition. The theme has also given rise to a form of writing that signifies a revolution at the level of style. Indeed, it amounts to the overthrow of yet “orthodoxy” the notion that philosophical thinking can be conveyed in the language of proposition and logical argument. More so than in say the novel or the poem the postmodernist influence on philosophy brings to mind the difficult disorienting obsessive stylistics of literary modernism.

METAPHYSIC

Metaphysical humanism is thus characterized by the urge to know yet this apparently noble impulse has a dubious underside it can just as readily devolve into the desire to possess and master to convert otherness and difference into sameness. The postmodernist rejection of metaphysics was impelled by the turn towards language. In philosophical terms this comes from two sources usually regarded as antithetical. From within the analytical tradition the late philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein bequeathed a new way of thinking and a new terminology “language games,” “family resemblances,” “forms of life,” the “private language argument” that philosophical postmodernism has assimilated and reworked in its own image. A different state of affairs obtains in continental philosophy and in the postmodernist theory evolving out of it. This could be simplified to say that words depend on other words

for their meaning, rather than on reference to some extra linguistic reality. From this comes the postmodernist dictum that language constructs human identity rather than vice versa. Heidegger writes: “Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man.” The linguistic turn associated with the postmodern condition is thus quite explicitly antihumanist denying human being the instrumental command of language that supports the belief in “metaphysical man.”

The two currents of Wittgenstein and Heidegger converge in the neo pragmatism of Richard Rorty. For Rorty, the post Kantian shape of western philosophy has been determined by epistemology out of which metaphysics emerges philosophical modernity has thus been recast as a theory of knowledge. Seeking to overturn this state of affairs Rorty’s version of the end of philosophy is directed towards the end of epistemology. Philosophy’s transformation into theory of knowledge was made possible by a theory of representation the minds ability to mirror the external world, thereby establishing certain congruence or fit between mind and world. Knowledge, says Rorty is not about congruence so much as about social acceptance it is what receives communal support or assent from one’s peers.

If Rorty sees epistemology as more fundamental than metaphysics and ensures it with the ethical intersubjective notion of edification Heidegger’s one-time follower Emmanuel Levinas finds ethical reasons for preserving metaphysics or at least for reworking it. Before metaphysics in anything he declares it is ethics. Levinas sees the philosophical systems of west as having exercised, in the guise of ontology a deep seated suppression of otherness. Countering this, he conceives of the ethical as non-foundational and prior to those system. The ethical encounters the face to face relation to the other is the originary instance of metaphysics its primordial enactment. In keeping with this attitude Levinas has described the ends of humanism and metaphysics and the death of God and of man, as apocalyptic ideas or slogans of intellectual high society, brought on by the tyranny of the latest fashion.

DEREGULATE SUBJECTS

The metaphysical subject was an early casualty of philosophical postmodernism. In the western tradition man has been the measure of all things and the maker of all meanings and the autonomous transcendental subject the site where meaning is incarnated. The strict separation of human and natural are the orders could be maintained by asserting that man was inherently metaphysical a truth hungry being who yearned for self-enlightenment. Equipped with this metaphysical optic man was able to transform experience into knowledge and his involvements in the world- no longer blind and present based into the material for human empowerment. But the most sustained and influential pronouncement of the end of man came from the historical discourse analyse of Michel Foucault. His anti-humanist spirit is made manifest in a single expression man he declares is as an empirico-transcendental doublet. This strange entity arose because of human sciences to tendency to situate man as both origin and evaluative limit placed him in a position that was unintelligible. Taking stock of the scientific contradictions of the past 160 years that have made man the sacred being that he is Foucault issues a bold declaration if those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared then one can certainly wager that man would be erased like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.

The above debates about anthropocentrism have never been more than peripheral concerns in the mainstream of the Anglophone world. A more pressing debate here which has infiltrated the media as well as the academy concerns the relationships between human beings and the natural world and between human beings and animals. Environment anxieties green politics and debates about speciesism have decreased the sovereignty of the human animal more thoroughly than any number of structuralist-humanist debates could ever have done. What they share with the death of the subject thesis is the anti-anthropocentric conviction that man is no longer the measure of all things but something to be measured like anything else in the world. Whether as abstruse theoretical polemic or populist concern over ecological ruin man's dethronement continues.

Yet philosophical postmodernism still has something to contribute to these more pressing forms of anthropological deregulation albeit couched in language and postulates rebarbative to a mainstream

readership. The most prominent strand of postmodern ecological theory derives from Heidegger's animadversions on nature. His antipathy to human action lies in the danger of the will to will the indefinite desire to master nature and dominate the earth. This craving for mastery manifested through man's technological command is what lies behind the ruinous environmental practices of the twentieth century. Advocates of green politics and radical environmentalism have used Heideggerian arguments to urge the adoption of a more benign and harmonious attitude towards the nonhuman world.

There is much less concern with harmony and restraint or with human integration within nature in the collaborative writing of Deleuze and Guattari. The violence of ownership has defined the modern era, the twofold desire for war and property. But antihuman conflict is being overshadowed by a different kind of violence where man wages war on the world indeed Series estimates that the combined effect of environment as a form of ownership claim akin to an animal marking its territory, Thus the sullied world reveals the mark of humanity the mark of its dominators the found stamp of their hold and their appropriation. In the past the social contract has conditioned and contained the waging of war, another kind of agreement is necessary then for this new type of warfare a natural contract.

Thus far we have seen philosophical modernism described as post metaphysical, anti-anthropocentric, counter humanist non-narrative and hyper-realist. Postmodern feminist philosophy provides a cross roads were all have shaped to a large extent to a emergence and development of postmodernist styles. In the field of philosophy, feminist thinkers such as Irigaray have seen the tradition as a site of ceaseless conflict, the philosophical order is indeed the one that has to be question, and disturbed in as much as it covers over sexual difference. There is some similarity here with Baudrillard's strategy of disruptive immanence of being more virtual than the virtual.

The nature of Irigaray's horizon is also problematic for Butler, however who is ore concern with the behavioral notion of gender then with embodied notions of sexual difference. Gender she declares is not an inert category with fixed attributes, but a contingent doing a stylized repetition of acts. It points

towards a destabilization of identity there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender.

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